

1994. After the agreements have been signed, they will be submitted for Congressional approval, together with whatever legislation and administrative actions may be necessary or appropriate to implement the agreements in the United States. The agreements will not take effect with respect to the United States, and will have no domestic legal force, until the Congress has approved them and enacted any appropriate implementing legislation.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Thomas S. Foley, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 16.

Remarks to Physicians Supporting the Health Security Plan

December 16, 1993

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, all of you, for being here. And I want to say a special word of thanks to the physicians who have joined us here today; to Secretary Shalala and to Ira Magaziner and to the First Lady for all the work they have done. I thank especially my longtime friend and one of our family's physicians in the past, Dr. Betty Lowe, and I thank Dr. Bill Coleman, for the remarks that they made.

You know, I can't help but note right here at the outset that, I think it was just yesterday or the day before, one of the congressional opponents of our approach said that it was Socialist. When I heard that Alabama accent and that Arkansas accent—we've got a doctor from rural Mississippi here and another one from North Carolina—I thought these people do not look like a bunch of Socialists to me. *[Laughter]*

I'll tell you what they do know. They know that it's not easy to be a doctor in the world today. They still know what it's like to deliver a baby in the middle of the night or to get a call at daybreak from a mother whose child has a 102 fever or to care for an asthmatic patient for whom every breath is a struggle. They know what it's like to really make people's lives better, to save people's lives, and

to maintain in a very personal way the quality of American medicine as the finest in the world. And I'm convinced that they would not do anything to weaken that quality and are here because they want to work with us to improve it and make it available to all Americans.

More than anything, these leaders and the physicians whom they represent, many of whom are in the audience today, understand the problems of a health care system in which millions live in fear of losing their coverage while costs keep rising, in which last year over 2 million Americans did lose their coverage so that at the latest count we are up to nearly 39 million Americans without health insurance. They know that we have to fix what's wrong with this system without messing up what's right.

Our plan strengthens and restores what is best about our medicine and places the doctor-patient relationship back at the heart of the American health care system. It protects the American people's cherished right to choose their doctors. Indeed, it enhances that right by making it clear that people not now insured cannot be put into plans where they have no choice of doctors, something which is happening increasingly to Americans already under the present system and will continue to increase if we do nothing.

Under our plan, individuals, not their employers, have the freedom to choose the health plan that best meets their needs and desires. That means they can stay with their family doctors. Our plan also guarantees much greater freedom for the patient-doctor relationship, guaranteeing that the doctor, who knows what is best for the patient, and not some insurance or Government bureaucrat will make the decisions about care.

And finally, of course, as has been said, this plan supported by these doctors guarantees universal coverage through the requirement of private insurance mandated in each employment unit with a system of discounts for small businesses and businesses that have a lot of low-wage employees. Now, I think that is very, very important to emphasize. These physicians here represent over 300,000 American physicians. They know

that if we're ever going to control the cost of health care and provide quality health care to everyone, we simply have to have universal coverage. It is not only an ethical imperative; it is a practical necessity.

They also are in the best position to judge the importance of a universal coverage requirement that has comprehensive benefits, including primary and preventive care coverage. We have spent ourselves a fortune of money in America by not taking care of primary and preventive health care in health insurance policies. It has been a big mistake, and we have paid for it.

I appreciate their support for holding down the cost increases. I certainly appreciate their support, as you would expect, for the proposition that the significant amount of taxpayer money that goes into medical education should be now used to encourage more primary and family practitioners in a country in which we are now, frankly, graduating a disastrously low number of family doctors from our medical schools.

I am most grateful, however, again, because the presence of these physicians here debunks the notion that the plan we have presented is some sort of big Government, bureaucratic plan that erodes the doctor-patient relationship and reestablishes its basic principles. Every other advanced country in the world has figured out how to cover their citizens but us. And we're spending 50 percent more of our income on health care than most countries. And too much of it is going to people who are not doctors, who are not nurses, who are not providing hospital or clinical care, but who are just shuffling papers in a maze that is the most bureaucratic, complicated system on the face of the Earth today.

Now, I also want to say that this morning I received a letter, an interesting letter from the American Medical Association, which represents fewer than 300,000 doctors, but still a substantial number—just not as many as are represented on this stage, but still a large number—reaffirming, reaffirming the support of the AMA for universal coverage and clarifying the position taken by the house of delegates recently, in which Dr. Todd says that they are still for universal coverage, that they are not opposed to an employer man-

date, but that they think other options for achieving universal coverage in addition to an employer mandate should be considered. And I appreciate that, and I think we all should.

I do not wish this debate in this coming year to become unduly partisan, both within the medical community or the American political community. The truth is that all Americans have a common interest in universal coverage, primary and preventive care, slowing the rate of medical inflation, and reducing the incredible bureaucracy and regulatory intrusion into the health care system. All Americans have a common interest in that. They have an economic interest; they have a human interest, every family.

As I have said many times, there are very few families in this country that are not at risk of losing their health care. Most of them just don't know it until they lose it, their coverage. So we all have a common interest. And at this holiday season I would hope that we could do away with the destructive and counterproductive labels. I would hope we'll all get a laugh when we think about this eminent panel of Socialists up here on the platform—[laughter]—and learn to laugh about that and in this holiday season remind ourselves that perhaps the greatest gift we can give to our country in common is a greater sense of community and security, a major portion of which is universal health care.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Dr. Betty Lowe, president, American Academy of Pediatrics; Dr. William Coleman, president, American Academy of Family Physicians; and Dr. James Todd, executive vice president, American Medical Association. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Admiral Bobby R. Inman To Be Secretary of Defense December 16, 1993

Ladies and gentlemen, yesterday I announced that Secretary Aspin would be step-